HARAMBEE FLAME!

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural exchange is germane to human growth.

EDITORIAL

This being February, our focus is, of course, African history. Many of us look upon history as being something that only occurs in the past. But history is an ongoing affair. Part of this ongoing affair is war. African people, as other people, have had and continue to have involvement in wars, sometimes against each other, sometimes against forces foreign to us. We look forward to a day in which all people will have reached a state of maturity and mutual respect such that we will no longer fight. That time, however, is not upon us. We don't know if there will ever come a time in which we will "study war no more."

At the present, the U.S. is at war with the nation of Iraq and, at this writing, the first substantial ground fighting has begun on the Iraq-Saudi Arabia border. There are reports of at least ten U.S. marines killed and many others wounded but no reports on specific casualty figures on the part of Iraqi soldiers. It is highly improbable that African members of the U.S. marines involved in this battle are not among the dead or wounded. Africans, afterall, comprise approximately a third of the U.S. forces.

Before this mess is over with, many African lives will have been given up to make the Arab world safe for U.S. corporate profits and U.S. government position atop the "new world order." The fact that African men and women in Uncle Sam's military are on foreign soil, embroiled in a battle of life and death, is incredible in view of the conditions African people face right here in the U.S.

While the official Labor Department figures place unemployment for the general U.S. population at approximately six percent, the figures for the African population are twice that. And these statististics are not inclusive of the many thousands of men and women, African and otherwise, who have become discouraged and are no longer visiting the

employment offices. The infant mortality rate for the U.S. African population is almost twice what it is for the Caucasian population. And, now, the U.S. ranks first in the world in the rate at which it imprisons African people. The rate for African people in this country is four times that for African people in South Africa. There are many other conditions we could speak of. But we know painfully well what the overall picture is. We know that the crack epidemic in many of our communities and the gang violence and the many other manifestations of the things falling apart in our communities are symptoms of our profound distress.

Yet, despite the irrefutable evidence that the political and economic institutions in this nation, which George Bush represents, do not care one bit about us, some of us are willing to put our lives on the line for George Bush. One of the primary reasons for there being such a large number of Africans in the U.S. military forces is that job opportunities for African people are very limited. Much attention has been paid to this factor in this and other publications. There is another factor which is at least of equal importance. It is our(Africans in the U.S.) skewed sense of what "home" is.

A home is, of course, more than just a house. It is the place of one's origins, the place where one and his or her family live, the place to which one has an emotional attachment. We Africans in America have apparently grown confused about what is a home and what is merely a house where one lives. We seem to have forgotten that our foreparents were kidnapped from their actual home(Africa) and brought to the house of America as kidnap victims. While we, unlike these foreparents of ours, are not chattel slaves/kidnap victims, it can hardly be said that we are beneficiaries of a loving adoption. Rather, we have been and are tolerated and unwelcome guests.

We are tolerated because those who run this house don't want to be seen as evil and heartless by their international neighbors and because they figure we'll put up a fight if they try to kick us out of the house or "neutralize" us. We are unwelcome because we are not Caucasian, in a house where racism reigns supreme, and because we have, due to changes in the American economy, outlived our usefulness.

If one lives in a house where he or she is loved by those who run the house, he or she identifies that house as being his or her home and is willing to defend the house if it comes under attack. If those who run such a house believe they are threatened by a neighbor down the street and decide to leave the house and go kick ass, all the members of that house will join in this ass-kicking mission and will be willing to risk their lives. But only a very foolish person would fight to defend a house in which he or she is not loves, in which he or she is consistently mistreated. And only a tremendously foolish person would actually leave the house with those who run it to risk his or her life in an ass-kicking mission down the street.

This is precisely what African people in the U.S. military in the Persian Gulf are doing--being tremendously foolish people, risking their lives for a house in which they are not loved and against neighbors from whom they have received no threat. In this special edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME, we pay tribute to African people who have fought in the interests of African people and who have been able to distinguish between "house" and "home."

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$7 per 12 monthly issues

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BACK IN TIME

UPRISING ABOARD THE AMISTAD

(in 1839) After being prodded, poked, and pinched by Spaniards who were buying slaves, Cinque and thirty-eight other hapless people were packed into the hold of a 120-ton schooner called the "Amistad" whose destination was the Island of Principe. Two days out of Havana, a raging storm hit the ship. The regular crew fought to keep the ship moving against the elements until they fell into a deep sleep near midnight. Stuffed in the hold below, Cinque and his fellow slaves plotted their escape. Cinque dominated this group as he had dominated nearly every other. He gave the instructions. The others listened carefully, feeling that a man as self-confident as Cinque must be fully aware of what he was planning.

On board the Amistad were machetes and knives, placed out of reach of the chained slaves. Yet Cinque and the slaves got free of their irons. Peering up toward the deck, they could see no one but a solitary helmsman trying to keep the ship on its proper course. Silently spreading out, Cinque and his men fell upon all the whites at once. Senor Don Jose Ruiz and Senor Don Pedro Montez, their owners, were spared; the rest, including the Captain and the crew, were slain.

Cinque was now in complete control of the ship but knew nothing about navigation. Using Ruiz and Montez as helmsmen and navigators, Cinque directed them to steer the schooner eastward toward Africa, the land of his fathers, the land where his wife and three children were still mourning his absence.

...By steering a cleverly zig-zagged course, the wily Spaniards worked the Amistad all the way from the Caribbean to Long Island, New York...

(Cont. on p. 11)

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization Inc.), is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinctions between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms designating African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(p.k.a. D. Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. Submitted poems should not sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Editor's Note: In view of the U.S. war against Iraq and the large number of Africans among U.S. troops, we make use of this edition's "From Other Sources" to give recognition to African people in this country who are either refusing military participation in U.S. aggression in the Persian Gulf or/and are encouraging others to do so.

AFRICAN IN U.S. NAVY REFUSES GULF ASSIGNMENT

"A Black US Navy man is refusing to go to the Persian Gulf on the basis that to do so would be to defend chattel slavery in Kuwait.

"Donald Alexander, Jr. says he is committed to uphold the Constitution and defend his country when its borders or citizens are endangered, but he is not committed to support any political system that condones and practices chattel slavery...

"Calling on President Bush and the United States Congress to prove to the American people that slavery does not exist in Kuwait, Alexander said he will do everything in his power to educate 'every soldier and potential soldier about the facts of slavery in the region'..."

-from "Black Navy Man Is Refusing To Fight For Kuwaiti 'Slavery,'" which appears on pages 4 and 33 of the Jan. 12 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS.

AFRICAN STUDENT LEADER SCHEDULED FOR COURT-MARTIAL

"On Dec. 30, Sam Lwin, a 22-year-old student, participated in an independent panel in New York City attempting to mediate the rift in the anti-war movement. Four days later, the Marine Corps ordered him, along with seven others in the Fox Company reserve unit from the Bronx, to report to Camp LeJeune, N.C., to be court-martialed for refusal to fight in the Persian Gulf and in all wars...

"The first service member up for court-martial will probably be Eric Hayes, a student from Southern Illinois University and a Marine Corps reservist. 'Eric is the president of the Black Students Association of SIU, who filed for conscientious objector status and did not report when his Illinois unit was activated in November', Ennen (Melissa Ennen of the New York-based group Hands Off!) says. 'Military police arrested him in his dormitory room in the middle of the night, handcuffed him and hauled him off to Scott Air Force Base, and from there he was sent to Camp LeJeune'.

"Ennen points out that a surprising proportion of conscientious objectors within the military are in the Marine Corps--at least half she says--and the overwhelming majority of them who have been called to active duty are Black, Latino and Asian..."

-from "Marines To Court-Martial 8 Bronx War Objectors," which appears on page 9 of the Jan. 16 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y., N.Y.)

AFRICANS IN N.Y. CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY OPPOSE WAR

"A cross-section of prominent Caribbean figures residing in New York City are strongly opposed to U.S. Middle East policy and said at a recent Brooklyn press conference the crisis in the Persian Gulf isn't worth dying for.

"Caribbean-Americans, or people of West Indian descent, make up at least 10 to 15 percent of U.S. forces now stationed in the Gulf, a bulk of whom are said to be serving on the frontlines. Up to 50 percent of the military reserves not yet mobilized are of Caribbean heritage, said the leaders..

"It was revealed for the first time at the press conference that a number of those Caribbeans now in the Gulf were enticed or bribed into signing up for active duty.

"'Many of them were promised everything from adjustments in their immigration status to live permanently in the U.S., to job opportunities, educational scholarships, and other government benefits', said Rojas(assistant to the publisher of the AMSTERDAM NEWS)...

"The leaders said the vast majority of New York City's some million plus Caribbean people are opposed to the Bush Administration's Persian Gulf policies as are the majority of Black Americans and Latinos..."

-from "Caribbean Figures In City Condemn Bush's War Drive," which appears on page 2 of the Jan. 19 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS

AFRICANS ACROSS U.S. PROTEST BUSH WAR MOVES

"...In New York City, activists have formed African Americans Against U.S. Intervention, which links the Gulf war to this government's invasions of Panama and Grenada, and its threats of aggression against Cuba and other Third World countries.

"And the Washington-based African-American Network Against U.S. Intervention in the Gulf has been created to mobilize Black public opinion in favor of a negotiated peace settlement...

"The Piedmont Peace Project, which primarily serves Black people near the Fort Bragg, N.C. Army base, recently held a meeting to determine the impact of the Gulf deployment on the community. Two-thirds of the 880 people in attendance had a loved one in the Gulf...

"Leonard McNeil, a city council member in San Pablo, Calif., says that 22 years ago he was the first African-American war resister to go to Canada instead of Vietnam. Now, as coordinator of a peace and militarism project, McNeil is

busy counseling Bay Area military men and women who are refusing to go to the Gulf. Recently, at an Oakland Baptist church, two young women reservists and 21-year-old Marine Tahan Jones made public their refusal to serve in the Gulf; all have filed for conscientious-objector status...

"The Gulf Coast Tenants Organization has spearheaded 'justice caravans' throughout the Black Belt of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Since Oct. 14, the caravans have visited military installations, low-income housing projects, toxic waste dumps and savings and loan properties to call for spending on human needs, not the military.

"...Ex-Air Force Sgt. Mike Bowden's last active task was to bring home the body bags of Marines killed when their Beirut barracks was bombed in October 1983. Once homeless, he is now organizing anti-war protests in Philadelphia...

"The Black Consciousness Movement, the youth arm of New York City's December 12th Movement, has reached out to church groups, college students and grass-roots community groups throughout the city, urging young people to attend the Jan. 19 anti-war march in Washington...

"The National African-American Network Against U.S. Intervention in the Gulf...has targeted 30 cities for organizing work that includes outreach to Black radio stations and lobbying of law-makers."

-from "Black Communities Speak Out Against War," which appears on page 6 of the Jan. 23 THE GUARDIAN

AFRICANS IN U.S. CONGRESS AGAINST GULF WAR

"...From the start of the administration's march toward war last August, Rep. Ron Dellums, D-Calif., has been the outspoken leader of the congressional opponents to Bush's war...'I continue to believe

that if sanctions and other diplomatic efforts had been pressed we could have resolved this crisis without the needless potential loss of life and unfathomable destruction that has occurred with the bombing tonight and which will occur in the days and weeks ahead...'

"First-term Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is another Democrat who refused to mute her anti-war views because a majority of her colleagues gave Bush the authority to go to war.

"The Black lawmaker from Los Angeles continued, 'Let me warn my colleagues that for the sake of restoring the emir of Kuwait to his throne, a cause totally unrelated to any American interest, we may have begun a long and bloody conflict that all of us will have cause to repent'...

"Sanders(Bernie Sanders of Vermont) joined five Democratic members of the Congressional Black Caucus in voting no Jan. 18: Mervyn Dymally, Calif.; Charles Hayes, Ill.; Gus Savage, Ill.; Craig Washington, Tex.; and Maxine Waters. Dellums, four other Black caucus members--Cardiss Collins, Ill.; Major Owens, N.Y.; Edolphus Towns, N.Y.; and Donald Payne, N.J...voted 'present'..."

-from "Congress Catches War Fever; A Handful Say No," which appears on page 3 of the Jan. 30 THE GUARDIAN

Through a maze of claims and arguments, the case of the Amistad revolt began its tortuous journey up through the courts...The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Cinque and the other Africans, declaring them free to return to Africa, their native land. -from GREAT NEGROES PAST AND PRESENT by Russell L. Adams

THE AFRICAN-NATIVE AMERICAN ALLIANCE

During the First Seminole War(1816-1818) the efforts of the renowned Indian fighter and slave-owner, Gen. Andrew Jackson, had failed to break the dark alliance. Now, in 1835, Jackson was President of the United States. With the passing of time he had not lost his predilection for driving Native Americans away from their land, and had so increased his holdings of black men and women that he could be called "one of the biggest slaveholders in Tennessee." Meanwhile, not only was Congress developing every possible means to shut off the divisive and dangerous debate on slavery, but the old Indian fighter had carried his preferences and policies with him into the White House, and had had them approved by the national legislature in the Indian Removal Bill(1830). Once again it was declared legal and constitutional to dispossess the natives from their land, and to claim that land for the expansion of slavery and its products.

But the Seminoles of Florida would not cooperate. In 1835 several thousand of them were still there, many driven from Georgia and the Carolinas, and their black allies were with them. At that point, three groups of blacks were in the Florida Territory: a small group of legally free black people, concentrated especially in the Saint Augustine area; slaves - the largest group - on the white-owned plantations, especially in the Saint John's valley; and also - the most explosive group by far - the several hundred Africans who lived among the Seminoles...

The white people of Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and elsewhere were well aware of the continuing relationship between the Indians and the Africans. This was one of the major reasons they became increasingly adamant in their insistence that the Seminoles be removed across the Mississippi, by the use of whatever federal force was necessary...

...by December 1835 the Second Seminole War was officially launched in Florida.

In the struggle against the national government and the militia of Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee, the black allies of the Seminoles played a crucial role, for many of Florida's so-called Indian guerrilla bands were made up largely of blacks. This was the case with Chief Osceola's warrior group, for instance. These black men had already existed apart from the power of white oppression, sometimes for more than a generation, and were determined to maintain their freedom. Therefore, during the seven years over which the Second Seminole War extended, black guerrillas served and fought with impressive and fierce tenacity...

During the war one of the most important roles of the black allies of the Seminoles was to establish contact, recruit, and gain information among their brothers and sisters enslaved on on the white plantations. Two key men in this operation were John Caesar, who was second in command to Chief Emathla, better known as King Philip; and a man we know only as "Abraham," adviser to Chief Micanopy...

The black and brown guerrilla movement in Florida was not "speedily" put down; it survived even slave-tracking bloodhounds imported from Cuba and it lasted several years. However the struggle was isolated in areas of Florida, and was ended in 1842 without spreading through the South. By that time most of the Seminoles

(Cont. on p. 14)

ON THE FRONT

clothed in the uniform of
armed with the weapons of
poised against a foe of
ready to kill or die on behalf of
an enemy who feebly pretends
to be a friend
we crouch in trenches
peer over sand bags stacked
like swollen bibles at the lips
of graves straddled
by the image of a pale
and smirking god
god of george bush
god of george wallace
god of george custer
god of george washington
god of bull connor and bull whips
god of slave masters and slave ships
god of the masque of the red death
and the brown death
and the black death
and the foul breath
of white lies told endlessly
in rapid-fire succession
as the bullets zing in our direction
like sardonic one-liners flying
toward us and the crass deception
we keep falling for
and falling over
and falling in
while the rockets fall
and the shells fall
and the bodies fall
and we recall
that this aint the first time we've been sent
to the front to defend things that represent
the interests of rich white men
who will remain quite content and dry of eye
no matter how many of us die.

The white people of Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and elsewhere were well aware of the continuing relationship between the Indians and the Africans. This was one of the major reasons they became increasingly adamant in their insistence that the Seminoles be removed across the Mississippi, by the use of whatever federal force was necessary...

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(Cont. on p. 14)

Negro Abraham,
an interpreter and comrade of the Seminole Indians
in their fight for self-determination
against U.S. military forces.

Gatewood found blacks deserted in "unusually large numbers, and some joined the insurgents" David Fagan of the 24th Infantry accepted a commission with the Filipino army, and wreaked havoc on U.S. troops for two years. -from THE BLACK WEST by William Loren Katz

ANNOUNCEMENTS

African History Month Programs At U.N.O.

Feb. 6, 2-3:30 p.m. - Women's Study Lecture: "History In Contemporary Black Fiction"

Feb. 8, 9, 8:00 p.m. - Film: "To Sleep With Anger" at the Eppley Auditorium

Feb. 19, 8:00 p.m. - Film: James Baldwin, "The Price of the Ticket" at the Eppley Auditorium

Feb. 20, 12-2:00 p.m. - "The Rise In Campus Racism" at the Eppley Auditorium

Feb. 22, 6:30 p.m.-1:00 a.m. - From Africa To America Fashion Extravaganza Food Buffet & Dance

For more information, call 554-2248

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization African History Month Program On Feb. 24 at State Pen

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will hold its annual African History Month program on Sunday, February 24 from 5-8 p.m. at the State Prison in Lincoln. The theme for this year's program is "Quality of Leadership." If you are interested in attending, please contact the organization by no la ter than February 14. You may call 471-3161 and ask for extention 3380 between the hours of 12:30 and 2:45, Monday through Friday.